

Prairie View A&M University

Digital Commons @PVAMU

All Theses

8-1938

Education, A Factor in Character Building at Central High School, Galveston, Texas

Olga K. Thomas Lucas

Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pvamu.edu/pvamu-theses>

Recommended Citation

Lucas, O. K. (1938). Education, A Factor in Character Building at Central High School, Galveston, Texas. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.pvamu.edu/pvamu-theses/234>

This Undergraduate Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @PVAMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @PVAMU. For more information, please contact hvkoshy@pvamu.edu.

EDUCATION, A FACTOR IN CHARACTER BUILDING
AT CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL,
GALVESTON, TEXAS

By

Mrs. Olga K. Thomas Lucas

A Thesis in Education Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Bachelor of Science

in the

Division of Arts and Sciences

of the

Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College

Prairie View, Texas

August, 1938

DEDICATION

To

My Mother, and My Husband
Who have helped and inspired
me to advance myself educationally.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In planning the contents of this thesis, I have had the benefit of suggestions generously given by Professor W. B. Bozeman of Prairie View Extension School, at Galveston, Texas and co-workers in Galveston.

At all stages in the preparation of this thesis I have availed myself of the aid of Miss A. L. Sheffield of the Education department, whose care and judgment proved invaluable.

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Introduction	1
Purpose	2
I. Important Factors in Character Education at Galveston	3
A. Community	3
B. Social Conditions	3
C. Curriculum	4
II. Education and Social Change	6
III. Character Building a Goal of Education	13
A. Pupil Activity	14
B. New Methods of Teaching	15
C. Ways of Ascertaining Results	15
IV. Extra-Curricular Activities as a Factor in Devel- oping Character in Central High School	17
V. Conclusion	21
Bibliography	23

responsibilities of the legislature, the future which grows out of the present is surely taken care of.

It is not necessary to pass judgment upon these points of view whether the school prepares for the future by grafting adult power upon child nature or by encouraging a wholly purposeful living, at each stage of child life; it is clear that there is a real emphasis in

* *Education*, - How to Make a Curriculum, pp. 7 - 8.

* *Character and Education*, Dewey.

INTRODUCTION

It requires no more than a superficial acquaintance with the educational situations today to realize that the mastery of a textbook no longer constitutes the chief end of school education. The text is being transformed into a means for realizing more fundamental objectives. Emphasis in school has shifted from knowledge as book learning to information and activities as instruments in the formation of character traits.

Professor Bobbitt ¹ insists that education is to prepare men and women for the activities of every kind which make up well rounded adult life.

Professors Bode and Dewey insist that society is in a process of change and that the responsibility of the school is not only to conserve the past and train for the present order, but also to reorganize wisely the future. As Dewey states: If the environment, in school and out supplies conditions which utilize adequately the present capacities of the immature, the future which grows out of the present is surely taken care of. ²

It is not necessary to pass judgment upon these points of view: Whether the school prepares for the future by grafting adult power upon child nature or by encouraging a worthy purposeful living, at each stage of child life; it is clear that there is a new emphasis in

¹ Bobbitt, - How to Make a Curriculum, pp. 7 - 8.

² Democracy and Education. Dewey.

education. From a recent survey made of the student body in Galveston, we find through the work of various organizations and clubs outcomes that are gratifying. Personality outcomes, character traits, intellectual, moral and physical abilities, skills, power, attitudes and dispositions are aimed at directly. To live as one should live at each successive age-level is the one sure way of learning to live as one ought to live at the nature level of adulthood.

Purpose -

It is the purpose of this thesis to show:

How Central High School is filling an educational need in our community.

How economic conditions have caused the High School group to have a great amount of leisure times.

How young people are largely dependent upon the school for character building.

Social Conditions -

Change in social conditions is the most important factor in the problem of education, since it makes

CHAPTER I

IMPORTANT FACTORS IN CHARACTER EDUCATION
AT GALVESTON

A new philosophy of education has become imperative to take care of conditions brought about by social changes. A philosophy is needed that is capable of taking into consideration the new problems of living which have developed at the present time as the result of the numerous and important inventions, the new mental outlook of today and the new industrialism with its high specialization. Let us consider the factors involved:

Community -

The people of our country live under a Democratic form of government and so the prevailing educational philosophy must be such that it will train citizens to live wholesomely and happily, prosperously and safely in a democracy.

Moreover it is being more appreciated by those directing public education that children can not be trained in an autocratic institution for eleven to fifteen years and then suddenly emerge full-fledged citizens in a democratic country which has as its most fundamental characteristic-self-control. ¹

Social Conditions -

Change in social conditions is the most important factor in the problem of education, since it makes

¹ Thorndike, - Educational Psychology - Vol. III, PP.182-3.

necessary methods of education which will prepare individuals to adjust themselves to conditions in a changing civilization.

To take care actually of the needs of the children in the way that they were formerly taken care of requires that the school supplement the home by teaching those skills and providing those experiences that the home for various reasons can not provide. To do this the school will have to organize to supply the participation part of education that was formerly provided by the home. Curriculum content must be modified to meet the new needs.

Curriculum-

Why are we participating in curriculum revision? Why is it considered important and has become wide-spread? These are significant questions at the present time and ones which not only educators, but also all citizens, should pause to consider.

An inspection of classroom procedure in any progressive city of today and a careful study of educational literature reveals the fact that there is a new spirit aboard in our schools - a spirit that is the direct response to the challenge thrown down to the educators by the significant changes in our social life that have come as a direct result of the great industrial movement.¹

It is this new spirit that has prompted educators to undertake a profound modification of the materials

¹ Bobbitt F., - Character Building and the New Curriculum, pp. 217 - 220.

of instruction and classroom procedure so that the boys and girls of the present generation may go forth into life's work at least as well and perhaps better equipped for it than were those of the preceding generation.

points to the necessity of thinking through these things carefully and with due regard for the known facts in the case which may be summarized as follows:

First Institutions. When educational institutions were first established in America it was with the purpose of teaching children to read and write in order that they might be able to read the Bible and thus prepare for future life. In 1789 with the establishment of the Federal government and the separation of the church and the state, the objectives of education were wholly secular and came to be: First, acquisition of the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic so that in the future these children might carry on the activities of the government. Second, provisions for moral and ethical development of the individual. It was assumed of course, that instruction in the right way of behaving, would reflect itself in correct behavior. In other words it was the general belief that right conduct naturally followed instruction as to what is right, and hence the main objective of the school was ethical character.

Little by little there was felt to be a need for more knowledge about one's country and so geography and history were introduced. Then, as time went on, first one

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

A study of the history of education in America points to the necessity of thinking through these things carefully and with due regard for the known facts in the case which may be summarized as follows:

First Institutions. When educational institutions were first established in America it was with the purpose of teaching children to read and write in order that they might be able to read the Bible and thus prepare for future life. In 1789 with the establishment of the federal government and the separation of the church and the state, the objectives in education were wholly secular and came to be: first, acquisition of the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic so that in the future these children might carry on the activities of the government. Second, provisions for moral and ethical development of the individual. It was assumed of course, that instruction in the right way of behaving, would reflect itself in correct behavior. In other words it was the general belief that right conduct naturally followed instruction as to what is right, and hence the main objective of the school was ethical character.

Little by little there was felt to be a need for more knowledge about one's country and so geography and history were introduced. Then, as time went on, first one

branch and then another was added to school curricula. Each one devised to meet some particular need in the training of childrne for active life after school. The objectives of education for those times were sufficiently broad because they supplemented the education of the home, which at that time was a very effective educational institution. But the twentieth century brought fundamental changes in living conditions which have radically altered the scope and effectiveness of home life and have impoverished the educative possibilities of the home to such an extent that it in no sense functions as it did in the pioneer days of the early republic.

The people of America today live in an entirely different world from the world of a century ago. Industrialism ¹ has brought with it such radical changes in living conditions, in attitude of mind, in interpretation of democracy that much which was once effective and sufficient to the occasion has gone into discard. (New conceptions of living, new ideas of behavior, new methods of work and recreation, new moral situations, new relationship, both social and individual, new responsibilities and privileges are all the results of the many inventions and social changes of the past few years.) This has called for our new education and philosophy with a hope that we may cope with these new conditions.

¹ Literary Digest - pp. 114 - 116.

Modern life as lived by the child of today is quite different from that lived by the child of twenty or thirty years ago. At that time the school well supplemented the work of the home in the educating of the child by furnishing him knowledge of and facilities with the three R's. That was all it was expected to do; the home could do the rest. It is a mistake to assume that the adequacy of education thirty years ago was due entirely or even primarily to the effectiveness of the school.

We should bear in mind that natural participation in the life activities of the home and the community was possible then, and this was revealed to the child through the social and economic organization and gave him background and insight into the life of that time, thus making children capable of assimilating knowledge and information, skills and appreciations from what ever source they might be gleaned. Children of that time learned, just as they do now, through their own experiences; in a natural setting - a thing which is more difficult today.

There was little disposition on the part of parents thirty years ago to over emphasize the reading, writing, and spelling training of the child to the disregard of the very practical benefits received by participation in the home life and the solution of its problems. As a consequence, the total life of a child then although it consisted as it does now of life at home and life in the schoolroom was much more integrated than it is now.

The separation between the home and school was negligible in its effect upon the child. Teaching, then, helped a child to understand his environment. Today we find the opposite to exist, all because of our modern way of living.

There was little in the life of adults that was not also in the life of the child of yesterday. The social and economic life of the community was so simple and so easily understood that he could participate directly.

Transportation and communication facilities were simple and easily understood through participation, rather than through lengthy explanation. Production was witnessed from its inception to the finished product.

Today production, transportation, and communication are almost entirely machine performed. A child may participate in some particular part of a process, but high specialization limits this, and as a consequence, a child's life lacks the possibilities of integration that it formerly had. In the social, the economic, or in the industrial world a child because of their great complications and because of their separation, one part from another, in this period of high specialization of today can understand by few processes.

As an agency of social progress the school has sensed the necessity of reorganizing the material of instruction to meet the needs of children wandering in an unexplained and complicated world of which they know

little and find so difficult to interpret. Today the school is attempting to build a curriculum broad enough to meet the needs of children in every walk of life, varied enough to serve the best interests of each individual child, deep enough to fit children to live in their environment, yet simple enough to be mastered by children with out an enormous loss of time and energy.

Educators now realize that a new type of education is needed to furnish boys and girls of today their full share of experiences. (A school in which experiences worthwhile in themselves and educative in character development is characteristic of progressive education). This means that upon the school must be placed the responsibility of providing a simplified environment in which the child may live as an active participating individual. The point that must never be lost sight of in trying to solve the present problems of education as character building is this: Youth today is confronted with environment too complicated with natural activities so separated by specialization that there is little practical educative value in them because they are beyond the comprehension of the child.

The revision of the curriculum of the public schools is by no means a local problem. The movement is wide spread, extending not only the length and breadth of the United States but also in Europe. The old curriculum was made by textbook makers, who collected available in-

formation in each field. By piece-meal and trial-and-error method, factual material of each subject was gathered and arranged into a few inches of space in a textbook. It was devoid of vivid illustrative material and was unrelated to a child's world - a summary of experiences of other people offering little, if any, opportunity to the learner for getting first hand experience.

The new curriculum is made by men and women who know children and how they learn; who know present day life well enough to simplify it for the child so that it may be presented in an understandable manner; who know values and can distinguish from the vast multitude of facts and information which society has collected through long centuries, those informations and knowledges most necessary for a clear understanding of a complicated world. Those habits and skills most essential to use as tools of learning so that individuals may remain students throughout life; those appreciations and attitudes most necessary to form the right character in citizens to fit in a democracy are essential elements in building a new curriculum. The old curriculum was static; the new curriculum is dynamic and continues to grow from day to day and from year to year. The new curriculum is in a continuous process of revision just as the social world is continuously in a state of revision and change. The old curriculum was made for adults. It was built on adult psychology and was a formal catalog presentation of facts for memorization. The

new curriculum is for children. It is based upon child psychology and laws of learning, and is far more vital than the cataloging of facts and information for memorization, because it offers opportunity for learning from experience itself.

The old curriculum was tested in terms of mastery of facts, the new curriculum is tested in terms of power to do. The old curriculum divorced school from life, minimizing the use of relevant facts; the new curriculum is a study of life simplified and graded to meet the limited comprehension of children.

Furthermore, it must be realized that the school can be but one agency among the many that be active in forming character. Its influence is neither absolute nor intense.

Formation of character is going on all the time, outside and inside of the growing boy or girl; parties and movies; the presence or absence of responsibility in the home; the attitude of parents toward the mother; all these are influences. In short, character is something that is formed rather than taught. When the public is faced with the sum total of bad results of existing conditions, a very good sign that the schools are not doing their duty. But better indication for parent-teacher would be a large element in bringing about better moral education of children and youth. Through action parent organizations,

CHAPTER III

CHARACTER BUILDING - A GOAL OF EDUCATION

Should the school be blamed for the seeming deterioration of character among the young people of this country?

In studying this question, two things should be considered. In the first place the roots of character go deep and its branches extend far. Character means all the desires, purposes and habits that influence conduct. If we could look into the person's mind and see what mental pictures are habitually entertained, we should have an unsurpassed key to his character.

Furthermore, it must be realized that the school can be but one agency among the many that is active in forming character. Its influence is neither constant nor intense.

Formation of character is going on all the time. Friends and associates of the growing boy or girl; parties and movies; the presence or absence of responsibility in the home; the attitude of parents toward one another, all these are influences. In short, character is something that is formed rather than taught. When the public is faced with the sum total of bad results of existing conditions, a cry goes up that the schools are not doing their duty. But better education for parent-hood would be a large element in bringing about better moral education of children and youth. Through active parent organizations,

more of the outside world can be brought into the school room breaking down that isolation from home and social life - which is one of the chief reasons why schools do not do more effective work in character formation.

Education has now broaden out to include a first hand concern for character development of our pupils. We are now attempting to define the outcome of schooling in terms of objectives of growth and development, traits of character for which subject matter and school activities are means not ends. Today we no longer consider learning to be a process in which outer impressions are written up on a blank mind just as we would trace up on a tablet and expect a perfect character.

Pupil Activity -

Concentration upon pupil activity as means for educating boys and girls in contrast with traditional methods is the new thought of today. For some years, teachers have been endeavoring, first, to state the objectives which subject matter should realize and second; to translate these objectives into specific items of subject matter. We have found that we must concentrate on those activities in which pupils engage, in order to realize objectives set up. The activities must constitute the child's way of life and aid in growth and development into a worthy citizen. ¹

¹ Taylor - The Passing of the Recitation, pp. 29 - 45.

New Method of Teaching -

In the new way of teaching,¹ the center of gravity shifts from the mere reciting of assigned lessons to the ways of the learning process. A teacher will still ask herself: What do I want my pupils to know about this topic? What information is one of most value to them? What changes in the lives of my pupils do I want this topic to effect? What habits of study or methods of procedure should they acquire in mastery of this material? What should I have my pupils do in order to realize these objectives? How can I assure myself that my teaching and their study is actually transforming their lives?

Ways of Ascertaining Results -

We will find the answer to our questions if the desired characteristics are being developed. Progressive teachers are devising methods ascertaining the influence of school work. They trace the effect of school experiences upon life outside of school by what these enable or stimulate a pupil to accomplish more or less of his own free will.

In addition to formal courses, many schools have introduced various schemes of character building out-of-school agencies - a little society.² In this society each child is provided with a sheet on which he checks his daily conduct. These are totaled and each score contri-

¹ Pierce, Bessie L. - The Socialized Recitation, p. 116.

² School and Society, - pp. 585 - 589.

butes to a reward.

Another part of the school period, say a semester, the school centers its attention upon one character trait, such as, courtesy co-operation or neatness. The visitors to the school are given one or more cards. When a guest observes some specific act of a child demonstrating this trait, the child is given the guest card. He proudly takes this to his home room and thus increases the possibility of his group for winning the coveted home room prize presented in the assembly which closes the contest.

A further trend which is noteworthy is the growth of character tests. These tests are many in number and vary both in the traits measured and in the method of measurement. Examples: There is a reliability test which measures the reliability of a student by lending him a book and asking that it be returned at a stated hour; honesty is determined by the boy's insistence or lack of it returning surplus change given him upon purchase of some item at the store.

CHAPTER IV

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AS A FACTOR IN DEVELOPING
CHARACTER IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

The present status of extra-curricular activities illustrates the growing concern of formal education. ¹ For a time the school ignored and many times frowned upon these activities. Gradually teachers have come to see the possibilities in the way of utilizing the social interests of pupils and today extra-curricular activities extend to practically every phase of school work. In addition to athletic associations and social clubs there are now many organizations which relate to various subjects of the curriculum. In the Galveston School System are found:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| | Purple Quill |
| 1. Newspaper Clubs | - Reporter |
| | Advertising |
| 2. Literary Clubs | - Public Speaking |
| | Debating Club |
| | Junior Dramatics |
| | Phyllis Wheatley Literary |
| 3. Foreign Language | - Spanish |
| | Latin |
| 4. Cultural | - Story Hour |

- Choral Club
- High School Band
- Girl Reserves
- Girl Scouts
- 5. Character Building - Boy Scouts
- Hi Y Boys.

The objectives and activities of one of these clubs will further illustrate the emphasis laid on character and educational values that are made possible. The description of the activities of The Story Hour Club is as follows:

The Story Hour Club.

Aim: To lay the foundation of literary taste in children by acquainting them with stories of a high type. Stories full of appeal to the youth's heart, yet cast in a form which has real literary merit. To give training in effective delivery of a short story.

To introduce pupils to the club life of the school and cultivate a feeling of comradeship.

To inculcate the moral obligation in the pupil to give his best service for the benefit of his group.

At a joint meeting of the various school clubs, Miss Smith, Dean of Girls in an address on "Social Problems of The High School Pupils", has pointed out the dire need of home, school and community co-operation in the teaching of character education. She has suggested the

means that Central High School is using in launching its program of character education. A summary of Miss Smith's address is quoted here.

Character education is not merely the work of school and the home, but the community has a very great influence, good or bad, upon the development of character in boys and girls.

The responsibility of the schools has greatly increased since the family unit has practically ceased to function and relatively few activities are found in homes of today. Therefore, the schools of Galveston have taken on the socializing forces of character building and readjustments. First through individual counseling and guidance; third, through school and classroom administration. It is in the school where kindly, wholesome contacts of real companionship and friendship must come to boys and girls to be of any value in adulthood. In Central High School today. There are several major activities that have possibilities for socialization and character building. These are assemblies, clubs, dramatics, publications and social activities. The work has been so well organized and the results thus far so encouraging that is reasonable to believe that each organization is playing well its part to develop worthy characters to fit in the life of the community.

Central High School teachers are united in their efforts to use extra curricular activities to the end that

these will transform boys and girls in the direction of worthy pursuits. The whole school attempts to vitalize and develop the things that interest the child and to bridge the gulf separating Central High School from the general concerns of life.

An example will indicate this wider concern of Central High School, in the case of B. S. a girl who was a problem. Her teachers found her to be a very brilliant girl, but just wouldn't apply mind. Upon investigation, it was found that this girl was helping a mother to rear ten smaller brothers and sisters. Being the oldest child of a large family, this girl was neglected. She developed a bad habit of stealing. Upon investigation the teachers found this to be the result of B. S.'s wanting to look as nice as other girls of her class. A part-time job was secured for her. As a result the girl's deportment and scholastic record was greatly improved.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Gradually the conception of schooling has come to mean not merely preparation for adult life but an integral part of child life itself. At first we have seen it consisted in little more than formal instruction within a very limited field. The textbook dominated the situation and the master's duty was summed up in the injunction to see that pupils learned their lessons. Education has now broadened out to include a first hand concern for a pupil's growth. We have today an emphasis upon education for character building. We now think of schools as concerned with the preparation of all boys and girls for an intelligent participation in democratic living.

In concluding this discussion it is well to point out that while the last word has not been said on the material to be studied, the methods of teaching in the public school are encouraging. We must remember that in the field of education, that without proper method and sympathetic attitudes, the best intentions on the part of the teacher come to nothing. We have devoted science to the study of material progress; we must now devote science to the study of the betterment of the conduct of individuals. It is at that point our failure is evident.

We need to map out situations to which pupils must be taught to respond properly, we need to give them a

consensus as to what should be done in those situations. We need to develop conduct on the basis of taste. It has always been a maxim in teaching morals, that until an individual does what is right as a matter of feeling and taste he cannot be safely left to act as he should act.

With all this talk about teaching the pupil to think for himself, it must be kept in mind that life is so complicated and the wisdom of the race so subtle that unless one is reinforced by proper sentiments and taste and feeling it is always all too easy to think of a logical sounding excuse for doing what one knows perfectly well he ought not to do. This places a great responsibility upon the teacher. She should know that:

To teach

Is not alone to curb

Unruly youth who school disturb

And make reports and hand out grades

And deal with pupils as with shades.

To teach

It is to reach to find

The hidden laws of growing mind:

In hay to see the coming man

Then shape him to a splendid plan

This is to teach.

¹ Bode, B. H. - Modern Educational Theories, Chapter II, III. Pp. 304 - 309.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

- Bobbitt, F., - How to make a Curriculum.
Houghton Mifflin Company,
Dallas, Texas, 1924.
- Bobbitt, F., - Character Building and the New Curriculum.
Houghton Mifflin Company,
Dallas, Texas.
1928.
- Bode, B. H., - Modern Educational Theories.
MacMillan Company,
New York City, New York.
1926.
- Dewey, John, - Democracy and Education.
MacMillan Company,
New York City, New York.
1916.
- Douglas, Harl R., - Organization and Administration,
of Secondary Schools,
Ginn and Company,
New York.
1928.
- Foster, H. H., - High School Administration.
The Century Company,
New York City, New York.
1928.
- Sayles, M. B., - The Problem Child in School.
MacMillan Company,
New York City, New York.
1925
- Thayer, V. T., - Passing of the Recitation.
D. C. Heath and Company,
Dallas, Texas.
1928.
- Thorndike, B. L., - Educational Psychology,
Teacher's College, Columbia University,
New York City, New York.
1917.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (Continued)

BOOKS

- Wilson, H. B.,
Lull, H. G. Kyte - Methods of Teaching.
Silver Burdett and Company,
New York City, New York.
1924.

PERIODICALS

- Fishbein, Morris M. D., - Character Training for Youth.
Bureau of Education, Bulletin
No. 3.
1923.
- Kennedy, J., - Helping boys and girls to develop
wholesome personalities.
Hygeia.
October, 1936.

MAGAZINES

- Studebaker, John W., - Character Education - Past and
U. S. Commissioner of Present.
Education
May 2, 1936.
Hygeia
Vol. 15, No. 3.
- Studebaker, John W., - Three R's not Enough.
Literary Digest
December, 1932.
- Wilkinson, W. A., - Character Building Nation's Schools.
The Nation's School.
1927.